



# IMCOM *Safety* Gram



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## Handling 'Old Man' Winter

Never underestimate winter's blast. They call winter an "old man" but he's far from frail. In fact, he's apt to strike a deadly blow when you least expect it.

Over exposure to cold and dampness can cause your body temperature to lower. This condition is called hypothermia. You may have it when you start to shiver and experience chills, or find yourself unable to think or speak clearly.

You could also get frostbite which is when your body tissue freezes. Frostbite happens most frequently to your extremities like your feet and toes, fingers, face and nose. Symptoms include numbness and a white and waxy appearance to your skin.



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### *How to avoid hypothermia or frostbite:*

- ◆ Select proper clothing for cold, wet, and windy conditions. Dress in layers so you can add or remove clothing as the temperature changes. Carry extra gloves and socks in case yours get wet.
- ◆ Rest frequently in a warm, dry place. Fatigue contributes to cold injuries. Perform work during the warmest part of the day.
- ◆ Carry survival gear in your vehicle so you can stay warm in case of a breakdown or crash.
- ◆ Avoid exhaustion or fatigue because you need energy to keep warm.
- ◆ Never work alone. Always have a buddy nearby.
- ◆ Fight off the cold by eating high energy food and drinking warm liquids frequently. Avoid drinks containing caffeine or alcohol because they cause dehydration. Drink warm, sweet beverages. Stay away from caffeine and alcohol.

### *How to walk safely on snow or ice:*

Even walking in the winter can be a challenge. Slips and falls on snow and ice are a common occurrence. Follow these simple tips when walking in the winter...

- ◆ Wear insulated boots with good rubber treads.
- ◆ Take short steps and walk more slowly so you can react quickly if you slip or fall.
- ◆ Keep both hands free for balance, rather than in your pockets.
- ◆ If you must walk on the street, walk against the traffic and as close to the curb as possible.
- ◆ Wear bright clothing or reflective gear at night.

### *Hazards associated with working in winter environments:*

Hypothermia, frostbite, and slips and falls on snow and ice are only a few of the hazards "old man" winter can throw at us but there are many more...

- ◆ Carbon monoxide poisoning
- ◆ Being struck by falling objects (icicles)
- ◆ Electrocutation because of downed power lines
- ◆ Falls from heights (shoveling snow off roofs)
- ◆ Roof collapse under heavy snow
- ◆ Dehydration
- ◆ Back injuries or heart attack while shoveling snow



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***Take these precautions and you might get away with calling winter an 'old man'.***